

Something Extra Eleventh Week in Ordinary Time Tuesday, June 18, 2019
2 Cor 8:1-9; **Mt 5:43-48** (When we allow God to be the center of our lives, then we have that goodness to act out of as well.)

“So be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

This, in a way, is a culmination of a series of teachings on **what it means to be a true moral person**. And as you have gathered already, it is not a matter of simple behavior out there in the world subject to the law or the rules, but **it is an inner disposition**. So not only is murder forbidden, but hatred of brother is forbidden. Not only is adultery forbidden, but lust is forbidden. Not only is love of God required, but love of even one’s enemies is required. And there is this idea that **God really wants something extra from people**. He is eliciting **something courageous, something heroic**. So he asked the question: “What is unusual about that?” There are forms of behavior that are perhaps polite, common, decent. But God isn’t looking for simply what is decent or what is polite, but **he is looking for something that is notable and noble**. So he says, “What is unusual about that? Do not tax collectors do the same?” Tax collectors, don’t forget, are a rather low level of moral being. They were Jews who worked for the enemy as contractors and in various capacities. So speaking to this Jewish audience this is a reference to someone who is not even respectable.

Jesus’ point is God has required much more from us than merely being respectable and being decent. He **is really asking us to love our enemies—to love our enemies—to pray for those who persecute us**. I don’t believe any other teacher in the history of the world ever said those things, unless that teacher is quoting this, but I mean this is as far as I know the only prophet, teacher, leader, guide whoever said God expects you to love your enemies and to pray for those who afflict you. But what’s the reason for this? We have to get this in mind. **Because that’s how God is**; that’s the reason. God is not being unreasonable, because he is demanding of

us what he demands of himself. So it is God who “makes his sun rise on the bad and the good.” God does not distinguish. **God acts out of his own goodness.** And **when we allow God to be the center of our lives, then we have that goodness to act out of as well.** And therefore we certainly can be good to the bad and the good, and we can be good to the just and the unjust, as God causes “rain to fall on both the just and the unjust.” This is true as long as people live on this planet. Everyone is blessed; everyone also has various crosses to bear. Everyone does, the good, the bad; everyone is in the same boat. **We are all blessed and we all have to bear burdens.** We are all blessed and we all have different challenges.

And what this is all about is **developing a universal empathy and sympathy for the whole of creation, including that part of the creation that has no sympathy and no empathy for us,** thereby creating something completely new, not living in reaction to others, but being the creator of a new behavior. How could this happen? Because **God is extending his realm and his power and his being into our hearts and minds and souls, so it’s possible.** We can create something new, and that’s what it means to be a disciple.